

**Southwest Civilian Personnel Operations Center  
Fort Riley, Kansas**

**SWCPOC**



# Trailblazer

**Issue 6-03**

**Together Everyone Achieves More**

**December 2003**



**Holiday Message  
From the  
Civilian Human Resources Director,  
Southwest Region**

If I could wrap up this past year in one word, it would be "Change". We in the Civilian Human Resource community have experienced many changes within the past year that forced us to face some very interesting challenges. However, as a team, we stepped up to the tasks and continued to press forward to ensure that as a region, we continued to provide the best service we could to all our customers.

Each of us is a part of the Army team. We know that all of us had to make some adjustments and concessions – but overall, we prevailed in keeping our commitment to the Army values.

The Holiday Season is now upon us and we can breathe a sigh of relief as we look forward to joyful family gatherings and a New Year 2004 that will undoubtedly bring us more events and experiences that will reinforce our team efforts.

Thank you for your dedication and commitment to duty this past year. May each of you have a very Joyful and Blessed Holiday Season with family and friends. Let us resolve that the New Year 2004 will help each of us grow in our respective fields and careers to make Army even better!

**Happy Holidays to All  
And a Very Happy New Year!**

**Ken Nephew  
Civilian Human Resources Director  
Southwest Region**



## **New Personnel System**

The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal year (FY) 2004, signed by the President on 24 Nov 03, includes a provision that authorizes creation of the National Security Personnel System (NSPS). The NSPS allows the DoD to design a modern, flexible civilian personnel system needed to meet the security challenges that the Department faces today and into the foreseeable future.

Additional information regarding the NSPS can be obtained by accessing the Civilian Personnel Management Service (CPMS) website <http://www.cpms.osd.mil> (click on "National Security Personnel System Information Web Site," then "Briefing Charts").

The Office of the Secretary of Defense is in the process of organizing the milestones and implementation plan for the NSPS. Information will be posted to the CPMS website as it becomes available.

Other key provisions of the NDAA that affect civilian employees include the modification of the overtime pay cap, common occupational and health standards for differential payments for exposure to asbestos, increase in annual student loan repayment authority, and changes to the SES pay cap and performance standards.

The legislative language for these and other civilian personnel-related provisions is contained in the extract of the NDAA dealing with civilian personnel matters at "NSPS Legislation," referenced above.



## Survivor Benefits



Do you know what your loved ones are entitled to in the event of your death? If you do, have you passed this information onto them?

Unfortunately, death is not something we want to think or talk about and death is something that certainly is not planned. Be proactive - check into what benefits your surviving spouse would be entitled to. A good web site to provide that info is <http://www.opm.gov>.

### Real Case Scenarios:



1. Employee dies leaving a surviving spouse but when the counselor reviews the Official Personnel Folder (OPF), it is discovered that the beneficiary form on file for FEGLI life insurance is one from the 1970's while the employee was married to a different spouse. The death counselor now has the difficult task of informing the current spouse that she is not the beneficiary on her spouse's FEGLI life insurance.

2. Employee dies but during his years of service, he had transferred from CSRS retirement system to FERS retirement system and has an SF 2808, Designation of Beneficiary, on file. Unfortunately, the SF 2808 is no longer valid since the employee died while covered under the FERS retirement system. Lump sum payment of contributions then must be paid out according to "order of precedence" which may not have been the intent of the deceased.



3. Employee dies and surviving spouse has no funds to pay monthly expenses until monthly survivor death benefits begin.



4. A single employee dies with valid beneficiary forms on file but leaves all benefits to a minor child. No thought is given to funeral expenses which typically averages about \$6000, so next of kin must determine how funeral expenses will be paid. The use of child benefits is restrictive on what they can be used for.

### Tips to prevent these scenarios:



Employees should consider keeping at least a six-month ready cash reserve on hand for surviving spouses in case of death. Death benefit claim forms do take time to process and many spouses are left with undue financial strain at a very stressful time. Money may well be tied up in stocks, bonds and other investments, but not readily available to survivors for funeral expenses.



Make sure those individuals you want as beneficiaries are given a copy of the beneficiary form. It does not happen often, but there have been cases where a beneficiary form did not make it to the OPF at all or not in a timely manner. This may confuse and delay the process.



Review your OPF annually, especially if a life event has happened that might affect whom you want to be named as your designated beneficiary.



**Important!** If you have a potential post-56 military deposit, check into whether it would be beneficial to pay it to increase an annuity. Don't leave this untimely task to a grieving spouse.

Below is a list of the applicable beneficiary forms. All forms are available on the OPM web page at <http://www.opm.gov/insure/designations/index.htm>

SF 2808	CSRS - Designation of Beneficiary
SF 3102	FERS - Designation of Beneficiary
SF 2823	Designation of Beneficiary - Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance Program
SF 1152	Designation of Beneficiary - Unpaid Compensation of Deceased Civilian Employee
TSP-3	TSP - Designation of Beneficiary

**A needed Reminder!** beneficiary form is only if you do not want the employee benefits to be paid out according to the legal "order of precedence". The "order of precedence" is as follows:

1. Designated beneficiary



2. Spouse
3. Child or children in equal shares
4. Parents
5. Executor or Administrator of the estate
6. Next of kin



**Do You  
Have Your  
CAC Yet?**

Common Access Cards (CAC) and CAC readers are being fielded for all Army employees. One of the utilities included in the ActiveCard Gold software that is being installed along with the readers is the option for "Quick Fill".

ActiveCard Gold's Quick Fill feature provides quick access via a drag and drop interface to credentials you store on your smart card (ex: a static or dynamic password, or a credit card number). A Quick Fill item can be used for any application where the credential is typed in a Windows dialog box. The number of Quick Fill items you can store in the smart card is limited only by the card's available storage space.



The "Quick Fill" can store the Army Knowledge Online (AKO) user identification and password. If you make the AKO information the default, every time you log on to AKO, all you have to do is drag and drop from the Active Gold Icon on the toolbar and the user ID and password will be automatically filled in.



If you would like to use this feature, double click on the ActiveCard icon on the toolbar. If prompted enter your PIN. You will now see the ActiveCard Gold Utilities window. Click on "Help", then "Contents and Index". Double click on "Managing Quick Fill Items". Highlight "Adding A New Quick Password Quick Fill Item". Follow the steps and enjoy using this feature.



## Training and Development Tidbits

Mr. Ken Nephew, Civilian Human Resources Director, Southwest Region recently completed Leadership for a Democratic Society course work at the OPM Federal Executive Institute (FEI) in Charlottesville, VA. This four-week program addresses all of the Executive Core Qualifications required by the US Office of Personnel Management for entry and success in the Senior Executive Service. It also assists

executives in addressing the five major focus areas in the President's Management Agenda.

You may be considering attending the Sustaining Leadership Management (SBLM) course. This course work curriculum provides 15 graduate credit hours and/or 9 upper level baccalaureate credit hours. These credits are readily accepted by Central Michigan University, American Military University, and Strayer University.

College credit is just one of the fringe benefits of increasing knowledge through the Army's Leadership Education Program.

Competitive Professional Development University Training (Tuition Assistance) is a planned, systematic program of professional development endorsed by the Department of the Army. Nominees submit a proposed program of study containing at least five related courses during a 12-month period. This program emphasizes part-time academic study. Applications are accepted during open season from 1 Dec – 1 Feb 03.

There are several mandatory courses of training for CP-10 Interns. Interns must successfully complete the following course work: Effective Writing, Briefing Techniques, Customer Service, and Dealing with Difficult People.

For more information contact Lois Vaughan, HRDD, 785-239-0092 or visit:

[http://www.cpol.army.mil/library/train/catalog/pkt\\_fcrupd.html](http://www.cpol.army.mil/library/train/catalog/pkt_fcrupd.html)



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